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mixed together in the established Filipino communities here.

The youths who attended school were faced with cultural confrontations and street gangs, both Black and Hispanic, with whom they were unfamiliar. Some of the youths reverted to a system known as "barkada," which permits them to meet together in groups for the purpose of socializing. Unfortunately, many of these groups named themselves, and members gave each other nicknames.

This was interpreted by both Black and Hispanic gangs, as well as the established Filipino gangs, as proof of "gang activity." Therefore, the youths in the barkada system initiated their own means of self-preservation, protection and retaliation. This was the birth of the Filipino gangs which are present in California today.

Filipino gang members benefited from excellent role models in the Hispanic and Black gangs. They learned how to dress, how to talk and how to disguise themselves by using nicknames. They learned the business aspects of dealing in stolen cars, guns and narcotics. Further, they learned to be "territorial"

as opposed to "turf" oriented and thus avoid being preyed upon by other gangs.

In much the same manner as the traditional gangs, Filipinos have family members in the gang with them. These gangs are comprised of brothers, sisters and cousins, as well as neighbors and school friends. Various members may belong to either allied or rival gangs while living in the same household. Different age groups may form separate "sets" among their own friends, while still identifying with the parent gang.

Filipino gang members usually dress in the current fashion. Some sets have shown descriptive traits, such as wearing black, 3/4 length trench coats. Others may wear white shirts and pants or have a "uniform" look. In general, these youths look very neat, clean and fashionable.

Members of Filipino gangs often choose newer Japanese cars which have been lowered, have tinted or louvered windows and good sound systems. The vehicles may also have flared fenders. This is the case with mini pick-up trucks as well. With lowered suspensions, some

trucks may have wide tires and polished wheels. These trucks may or may not have shells on the back, or may have truck club logos on the windows.

However, not all gang members own cars, so they will drive virtually anything their parents or relatives own.

The most obvious physical identifiers that we associate with gang members are tattoos. There is no specific tattoo that all Filipino gang members have, but there are some things to be aware of when dealing with these youth. An innocent looking "+" on the left middle finger of one person may not mean anything significant, but if all his friends have the same tattoo, it may be an indicator.

One gang tattoos their personal initials on the inside of their left index finger. Another has a complete logo that is usually tattooed somewhere from the calf to shoulder.

Another notable identifier is the cigarette burn mark. These burns can be located anywhere on the body, but generally are seen on the palms or backs of the hands or in the web of the hand. These marks appear to be a mark of

courage or "machismo." The more marks the gang member has, the more dedicated or "crazier" he/she is. These marks appear more frequently in the younger male and female gang members and are often worn by the self-proclaimed hard-core members.

With the increase in membership and sophistication of the Filipino street gangs, there has been a corresponding increase in the weapons they choose to utilize. The weapons currently being seized by law enforcement are no longer limited to "balisongs" (butterfly knives)

and clubs, but are shotguns, rifles and handguns. The ammunition for the rifles can be anything from target rounds to full jacketed military ammunition. The handguns are both small and large caliber, with automatics being the weapon of choice.

It appears gang members use any gun that they can obtain. Due to the increasing market in weapons, their theft and re-sale are an extremely profitable business. Furthermore, gang members have been seen at military bases attempting to trade drugs in exchange

for weapons, including hand grenades, from servicemen.

The graffiti of the Filipino gangs are very similar in design to that of Hispanic and Black gangs, and it is just as useful to law-enforcement officers. The initials of the gang appear on the walls in its neighborhood area, as well as the names of some members of their alliances or rivals. Gang members may have both the fantasy/cartoon name or a

"The more burn marks the gang member has, the more dedicated or 'crazier' he is."



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West Covina gang members flash hand signs while posing for a group portrait.

physical characteristic nickname in the manner of the Hispanic gangs. Names such as "Sinbad," "Aladdin" and "Wicked" are common. Members may have gangster names popular in the 1920s, such as "Capone," "Trigger" or "Li'l Gat."

The Filipino gangs here evolved from proud, well-educated and affluent families. Gangs do not only terrorize their own neighborhoods. They travel up to 50 miles to commit crimes in other Filipino communities. Recent developments include the Los Angeles gangs establishing sub-sets in San Francisco, San Diego, Las Vegas, Hawaii, Washington, Alaska and the Gulf states. Because of the increased mobility of these gangs, communities must utilize available resources to identify gang members and obtain the assistance necessary to deal with problems that inevitably accompany gang activity.

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West Covina gang members crossed out a member who became a "stone out."